

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8492

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 1818

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, LI

SUBJECT: PAL LEADER GABRIEL MATTHEWS RETURNS TO LIBERIA

REF: MONROVIA 0329

SUMMARY: GABRIEL BACCUS MATTHEWS, PRESIDENT OF THE PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE OF LIBERIA (PAL), RETURNED TO LIBERIA FEBRUARY 26 WITH THE INTENTION OF REMAINING TO REGISTER PAL AS A POLITICAL PARTY. THE CONSENSUS AMONG LIBERIANS CONTACTED BY THE EMBASSY FOR THEIR REACTIONS IS THAT, EVEN IF THE GOL AGREES TO REGISTER THE NEW PARTY, THE SOCIALISTIC ASPECTS OF ITS PLATFORM WILL PREVENT IT FROM GAINING SIGNIFICANT POWER. END SUMMARY.

1. GABRIEL BACCUS MATTHEWS, PRESIDENT OF PAL, CALLED ON THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR FEBRUARY 28 TO INFORM HIM THAT HE HAD RETURNED TO LIBERIA ON THD 26TH WITH THE INTENTION TO OBTAIN REGISTRATION OF PAL AS A POLITICAL PARTY. HE SAID THAT HE HAS STILL NOT RECEIVED FROM THE GOL THE PRECISE REQUIREMENTS OF LIBERIAN LAW FOR PARTY REGISTRATION. HE NOTED THAT THE EDITORIAL IN THE MOST RECENT ISSUE OF "THE REVOLUTION" (NO. 8, JANUARY-MARCH 1978) CONSISTS OF A LETTER TO PRESIDENT TOLBERT FROM MATTHEWS IN WHICH HE ASKS FOR A "DEFINITIVE DOSSIER" ON
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LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTY REGISTRATION. MATTHEWS SAID HE INTENDS TO ENGAGE AN ATTORNEY TO HELP IN THIS EFFORT. HE COMMENTED THAT THERE ARE ONLY TWO OR THREE LAWYERS IN LIBERIA WHO WOULD BE WILLING TO HELP PAL, ONE BEING C. ABAYOMI CASSELL.

2. MATTHEWS SAID THAT, AS FAR AS HE KNOWS, PRESIDENT

TOLBERT INTENDS TO CARRY THROUGH WITH HIS INTENTION TO PERMIT PAL TO OPERATE AS A POLITICAL PARTY. HE IS CONCERNED LESS WITH THE ATTITUDE OF PRESIDENT TOLBERT THAN HE IS WITH MORE CONSERVATIVE-MINDED MEMBERS OF THE TRUE WHIG PARTY. HE ANTICIPATES THAT THERE WILL BE MANY OF THESE WHO WILL ATTEMPT TO FRUSTRATE PAL'S POLITICAL ACTIVITY. MATTHEWS COMMENTED THAT HE HAD MOVED INTO A ONE-ROOM APARTMENT IN THE HOME OF A FRIEND ON LOWER RANDALL STREET AND A DAY LATER FOUND THAT HE WAS BEING PUT UNDER SPORADIC SURVEILLANCE BY CID.

3. QUESTIONED BY THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR CONCERNING PLANKS IN PAL'S POLITICAL PLATFORM, MATTHEWS REPLIED THAT THE PLATFORM'S ADVOCACY OF SOCIALISM SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS DEPARTING FROM TRADITION. HE SAID THAT "AFRICAN SOCIALISM", IN WHICH AFRICAN VILLAGERS WORK TOGETHER IN THE VILLAGE AND FIELDS, PRE-DATED THE INTRODUCTION OF CAPITALISM. HE PROPOSED REPLACING CAPITALISM WITH THIS TRADITIONAL FORM OF AFRICAN SOCIALISM. CONCERNING THE REFERENCE TO "AMERICAN IMPERIALISM" IN PAL'S "REVOLUTIONARY ACTION PROGRAM" (CONTAINED IN "THE REVOLUTION", NO. 7, OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1977), MATTHEWS ALLEGED THAT THE HISTORY OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, PARTICULARLY U.S. POLICIES WITH RELATION TO LATIN AMERICA, DEMONSTRATED THE IMPERIALISTIC NATURE OF THE UNITED STATES. (THE PROGRAM STATES "THE REPUBLIC

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OF LIBERIA MUST CEASE TO BE A STAGING BASE FOR AMERICAN IMPERIALISM, AND A RELAY STATION FOR TRANSMITTING COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN AFRICA".)

4. JOMA FLEMISTER, FIRST ASSISTANT DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE TRUE WHIG PARTY, TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARCH 7 THAT IT WAS LIKELY THAT PRESIDENT TOLBERT WAS SINCERE IN HIS STATEMENT TO PAL LEADERS THAT HE "WOULD WELCOME THE EXISTENCE OF ANOTHER POLITICAL PARTY AS LONG AS IT'S ESTABLISHED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF LAW." FLEMISTER ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT NO POLITICAL PARTY -- CERTAINLY NOT THE TWP--IS GOING TO "CUT ITS OWN THROAT" BY FACILITATING ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPETING PARTY. MATTHEWS IMPLIED THAT THE TWP WOULD FIND WAYS OF MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR PAL TO ACHIEVE LEGAL STATUS AS A PARTY. ON MARCH 13, SENATOR AYUN CASSELL TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT, ALTHOUGH LIBERIA NEEDS A SECOND POLITICAL PARTY, PAL'S ADVOCACY OF SOCIALISM WOULD PREVENT IT FROM EITHER ACHIEVING RECOGNITION AS A LEGAL POLITICAL PARTY OR FROM GAINING ANY SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT AMONG LIBERIANS. HE ADDED THAT THE GOL HAS ALREADY SENT WORD TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

THAT THE PEOPLE SHOULD BE WARNED AGAINST PAL, AND
PRESICTED THAT THIS WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO PREVENT PAL
FROM MAKING ANY HEADWAY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. HE SAID
THAT PAL'S CHANCES IN URBAN AREAS WOULD BE EVEN LESS
BECAUSE "LIBERIAN PEOPLE ARE NOT STUPID". MATTHEWS,
CASSELL CONCLUDED, SIMPLY DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE REQUIRE-
MENTS OF POLITICS IN LIBERIA.

5. COMMENT: CASSELL'S COMMENTS ARE TYPICAL OF THOSE
MADE BY LIBERIANS CONTACTED TO DATE ON THIS SUBJECT BY
THE EMBASSY. PAL'S ADVOCACY OF SOCIALISM, BE IT "AFRICAN
SOCIALISM" OR ANY OTHER KIND, IS ALMOST SURE TO PREVENT
IT FROM GAINING SUPPORT FROM MOST OF THOSE WHO MIGHT BE
IN FAVOR OF A SECOND POLITICAL PARTY AND IS SURE TO
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BRING UNITED OPPOSITION FROM ALL WINGS OF THE TWP.
CARTER

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